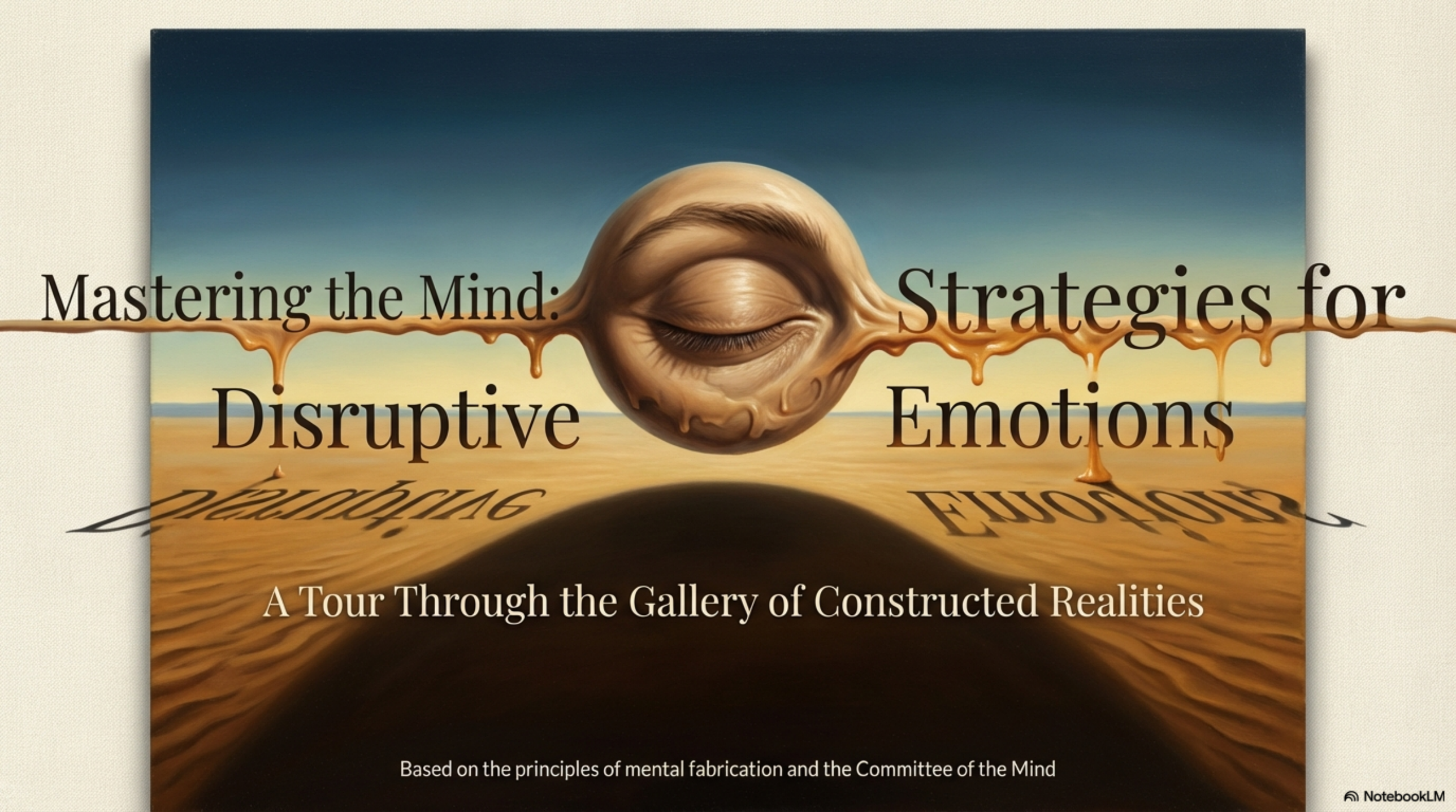
Mastering the Mind: Strategies for Disruptive Emotions
A Tour Through the Gallery of Constructed Realities
Based on the principles of mental fabrication and the Committee of the Mind

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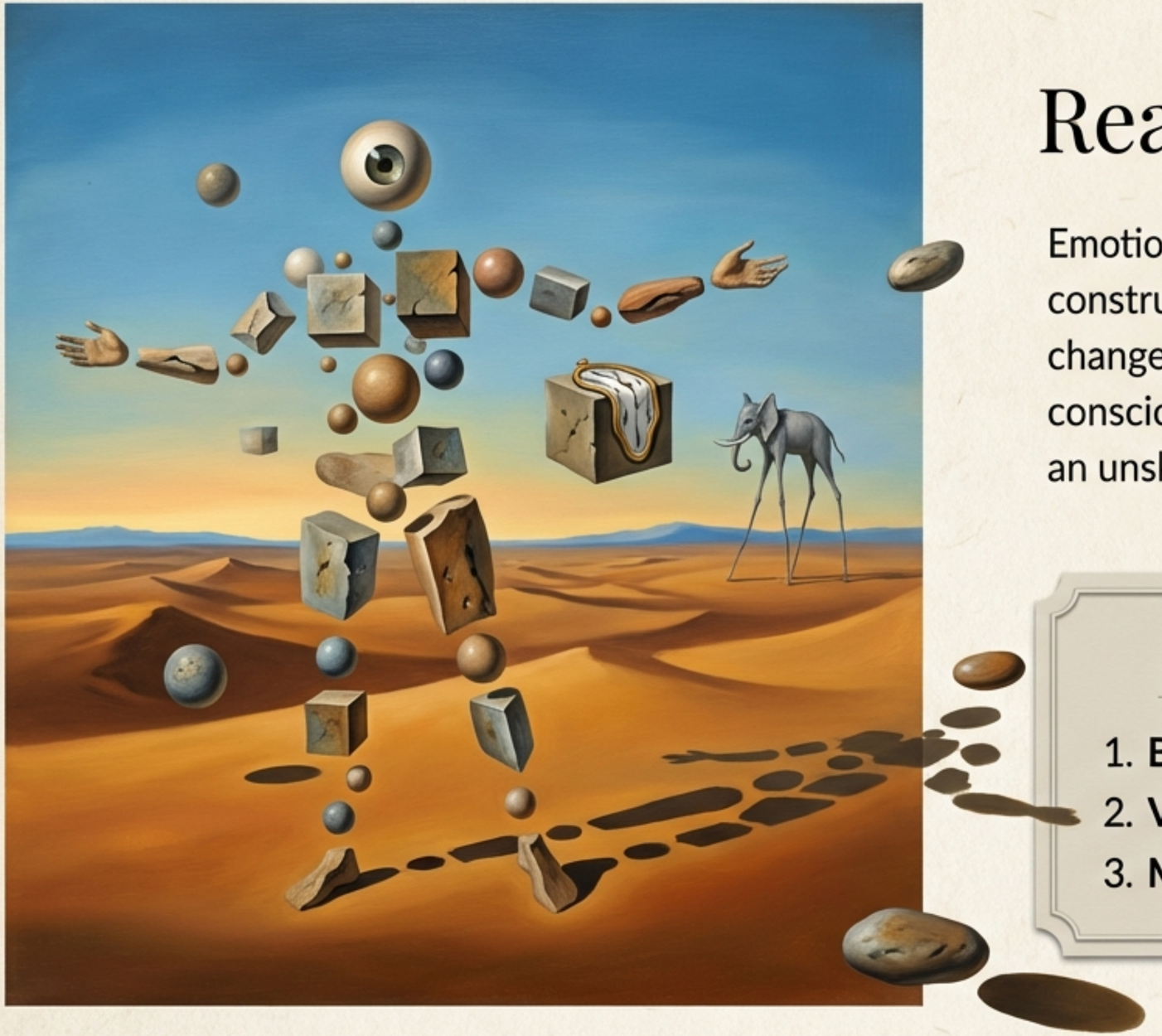

Reality is a Fabrication

Emotions are not immutable truths; they are bundled constructions. To change the emotion, you must change the building blocks. A skillful emotion you consciously fabricate is no less “real” or “you” than an unskillful emotion created by habit.

The Three Fabrications:

1. **Bodily:** The in-and-out breath.
2. **Verbal:** Directed thought and evaluation.
3. **Mental:** Feelings and perceptions.

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The Internal Committee

View your mind as a committee. A disruptive emotion is simply one loud faction claiming to speak for the whole group, trying to overthrow the members who want to meditate.

Identify

Ally yourself only with the members who want to benefit from the practice. Do not believe the loud faction represents the whole.

The Wildlife Observer

Adopt the stance of a naturalist at a watering hole. Be still so you don’t scare the thoughts away, but alert so you see them coming. The breath is the watering hole.

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The Distortion of Time Boredom & Impatience

Boredom

The Trap: Believing “nothing is happening.”

The Reality: You aren’t looking closely enough. Boredom itself is an event—it arises and passes.

The Fix: Look closer at the breath. Be the Wildlife Observer. If you don’t see anything, you anything, you aren’t paying attention.

Impatience

The Trap: Focusing on the mountain (the result) rather than the road (the cause).

The Reality: Focusing on the goal makes the journey feel longer.

The Fix: Focus entirely on the road—each inch of the breath. If you tend to the causes, the results are inevitable.

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The Distortion of Self

Discouragement & Doubt

Discouragement

Context: Comparing yourself unfavorably to an imagined ideal.
The Antidote: Read the Theragatha—even the masters faced severe struggles before awakening.
Tactic: Give yourself “pep talks.” Empower the “can-do” committee members. A bad session is infinitely better than no session.

Doubt

Context: Questioning the practice or the teacher.
The Antidote: You can only judge the truth if you are “true” yourself.
Tactic: Are you truly sticking to the breath? Pushing your limits? Being observant is never a waste.

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“The Distortion of Danger” in Playfair Display

Worry & Anxiety

The Illusion: We believe that worrying about the future prepares us for it. This is false. The future is uncertain; worry is a waste.

The Vicious Circle: Anxious feelings cause anxious breathing, which feeds more anxious feelings.

The Physiological Reset

1. Breathe deep into the abdomen until it feels “too full.”
2. Relax head and shoulders; let the stomach do the work.
3. Maintain this rhythm to cut the feedback loop of physical anxiety.

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The Distortion of Loss

Grief

Dedication: When ready, dedicate the merit of your meditation to the lost loved one. This transforms the act into a gift, providing inner stability.

The Shift: Healthy grieving requires shifting focus from ‘what was special’ (the relationship) to ‘what is not special’ (the universal fact that all things end).

You need to build the inner strength that can allow you to maintain a sense of well-being in spite of the inevitable losses that life throws at everyone.

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The Distortion of Memory

Old Wounds & Regrets

Harmed by Others

Forgiveness is a gift to YOURSELF. Scores in life never come to a final tally. Unburden yourself of the weight of retribution.

Action: Express a phrase of goodwill (“May you mend your ways”) and return to the breath.

Harmed Others

Remorse weakens you; it does not undo the harm.

Action: Resolve never to harm again. Dedicate your merit to those you harmed. Spread goodwill to all beings to remind yourself that we are all caught in this cycle.

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The Distortion of Desire

Lust & Infatuation

Lust
(The Body)

Focus on the attractive, and you feed the fire.

Tactic: Look right under the skin to the unattractive parts. Visualize the tension in your own body (hands, chest) and breathe to release it.

Infatuation
(The Story)

The fantasy creates a fake future.

Tactic: Inject reality. Visualize the person doing something demeaning, or laughing at you behind your back. If the fantasy is a lie, use a 'counter-lie' to break the spell.

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The Distortion of Fire

Anger

Physical Release

Locate the tightness (chest, stomach) and breathe it out.

Mental Strategy

The Fool: Visualize the enemy satisfied by your stupid behavior. Do not give them that satisfaction.

The Desert Survivor: Finding goodness in an enemy is like finding water in a cow's footprint in a desert. You must get down on all fours and drink it to survive. It is not for their dignity; it is for YOUR survival.

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The Distortion of Envy

Jealousy

The Source: Pinning your happiness on things under someone else's control.

The Perspective: The world is a drying puddle, and people are fish floundering for the last drop.

The Question: Do you want to fight for the puddle, or find a source of happiness inside that cannot be taken away?

Action: Step back. Cultivate equanimity and empathetic joy.

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The Universal Anchor

The Breath is the medicine for the mind.

1. Meditation is like cream rubbed on a rash. You cannot just apply it and wash it off; you must let it stay to do the healing work.
2. A “bad” session is simply the medicine working on a difficult patch of skin.
3. Deep abdominal breathing engages the body, soothes the mind, and cuts the feedback loops of fabrication.

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You Are the Fabricator

You build your reality through **breath, thought,** and **perception**. The ‘Committee’ will always talk, but **you decide who holds the floor**.

Be the Wildlife Observer. Be the Survivor in the Desert. Be the Master of the Committee.

“The energy you put into developing these qualities is sure not to be a waste.”

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